

MEMORIAL

ON THE SUBJECT OF

A MISSION TO BENGAL,

ADDRESSED TO

THE DIRECTORS

OF

THE HONOURABLE

THE EAST-INDIA COMPANY.

2

THE HONORABLE

THE HONORABLE

THE HONORABLE

THE HONORABLE

THE HONORABLE

THE HONORABLE

THE HONORABLE

MEMORIAL,

Ec. Ec.

IF a plan be in itself good, and tend in a very high degree to advance the happiness of the human race, it should not be lightly abandoned. The authors of it may, indeed, meet with much opposition and many discouragements before it can be adopted, and carried into effect; but they would be deficient in duty both to God and man, as well as unworthy the honour of carrying it into execution, were they not to continue firm to their object, and to persevere with patience and assiduity till it be obtained. What benevolent design that has been found most advantageous to the world, did not meet with opposition when it was first proposed? Some from understanding it imperfectly, and others from supposing it fraught with the most dangerous consequences, employed all their influence to defeat it. But when they have fairly examined its nature and tendency, they have patronized it with ardour, and praised the authors for that determined persevering spirit which before appeared under the guise of sullen obstinacy and rude teasing.

Under the influence of these principles, we again solicit your attention. Some months ago, we presented a Petition to your Honourable Court, requesting leave to go out as Missionaries to Bengal, to instruct the natives in the knowledge of the Christian Religion. With surprize and grief we were informed, that you did not see fit to grant our request, a request, in our eyes, so reasonable and easy. The importance of the subject, however, would not permit us to lay it aside : and finding that it appeared to multitudes of eminently good men, in all parts of the country, in the same light as to ourselves, we conceived it our duty to persevere. And we deliver this Memorial to state the subject to you fully, and respectfully to inform you, that we are coming forward with another Petition, which is supported by the recommendation of many hundreds of Clergymen of different denominations, both in England and Scotland, and likewise from Ireland, who may be considered as speaking the language of the majority of their hearers. Thus supported, we cannot but flatter ourselves, that you will feel it a duty and a pleasure to comply with the wishes of so many teachers of religion, and friends of the human kind.

It has pleased the Supreme Governor of the World to place under your guardianship many millions of your fellow-creatures. We sincerely wish that your Government may resemble his ; and that it may be the object of your ambition, that the impartial page of history may contain your names among those who have been eminent benefactors of the human race, and who have exerted their influence in promoting the best interests of those they rule. Virtue and happiness form a short but compleat list of what enlightened Englishmen will endeavour to secure, and to diffuse as widely as possible among their Indian subjects. Virtue has a direct tendency to promote happiness ; and virtue must flow from a knowledge of men's obligations and duty.

duty. All these Christianity advances in the highest degree: its principles are calculated to render man virtuous and good; and the path of true virtue leads to felicity. This Religion we wish to make known in your dominions of Bengal; and we apply for leave to employ our most vigorous endeavours for that purpose.

That you may know the extent of our Petition, we will frankly expose to you our plan and our designs.

If we obtain leave from your Honourable Court, we purpose to go out to Bengal with our families; to take a few persons with us as Catechists, and to settle in a part of the country which may be found most convenient, both on account of a healthful situation, and for furnishing opportunities of communicating instruction to the natives. When we have made ourselves masters of the languages, we design to employ our time in conveying the knowledge of Christianity to the Hindoos and Mahometans, by translating the sacred Scriptures for their use, by conversation, and by erecting schools to be kept by the Catechists for teaching the children the first principles of Religion. Such is our object; and we have sufficient funds for its support.

The favour we ask of you, Gentlemen, is, leave to go out to Bengal; and protection there, while we demean ourselves as peaceable subjects of the Government, and good members of the community.

In your answer to our Petition, you have had the goodness to say, *that our designs were well-meant, and that you were convinced of the sincerity of our motives and zeal.* But we trust that on perusing our Memorial, you will see reason to judge that our plan is safe for the Government, and useful to the people, as well as good in itself; and therefore

therefore proper to be granted by you with cordiality and pleasure. Indeed, we flatter ourselves you will be fully convinced you have nothing to fear from our conduct, from the methods we shall employ for propagating Christianity, and from the issue of our attempts, whether they prove ineffectual, or be crowned with success.

We must be destitute of common-sense, if we do not see it absolutely necessary that our conduct should be virtuous. Unless persons in our situation be eminently peaceable in their deportment, how could they possibly expect the patronage of the Government in India? A turbulent and disorderly behaviour, we must be sensible, would banish us from the country. Besides, unless our lives exhibited a pattern of those virtues which Christianity enjoins, could we ever imagine that the natives would pay the slightest attention to any thing we should say. In that case we should betray only a foolish hypocrisy, which would effectually defeat its own end.

As to the methods we design to employ for the conversion of the Hindoos, these too need excite no uneasiness in your Honourable Court. They know little of human nature who would attempt such a work by harshness, severity, or compulsion. To inveigh against their religion with bitterness would only be to irritate them against us: and to irritate is not the way to persuade, nor to influence their minds. It is only by gentleness, by mild persuasion, by displaying the superior excellence of Christianity, and by affectionately insinuating its principles into their hearts, that we can hope to prevail. We are well aware of the inveterate attachment of the Hindoos to their own systems and institutions: in proportion therefore to their degree of attachment must the prudence, and gentleness, and persuasive softness of Missionaries be; and the more carefully must every thing be avoided
that

that would create disgust, or provoke to wrath. In this way does the Christian Religion enjoin its Ministers to demean themselves in their attempts to propagate it in the world. In this way we purpose to act in respect to each individual to whom we may have access, not only at first, but during the whole time of our continuance in the country : our fixed principles, as well as a regard to success, bind it fast upon us.

Whatever may be the issue of our attempts, there will be no just ground for jealousy in respect to our mission.

Should we labour without effect, while we, and not we only, but all the friends of Religion, shall cordially thank you for your benevolent patronage, it will not be in our power (were we even so disposed) to create any uneasiness or disturbance. If all our efforts should be in vain, and the natives of Bengal should refuse to embrace the Christian Religion, we shall remain a few inconsiderable individuals, without influence over the people, rather objects of pity for risking, suffering, and labouring so much in vain, than calculated to excite the slightest alarm. Such, in the judgment of some of your Honourable Court, the issue of our attempt will prove. On your own principles then there cannot accrue the smallest danger from our mission. You will have the credit of obliging very many of your countrymen and friends ; and we, after unavailing labours in Bengal, not wishing to live to no purpose, will bid adieu to the ungrateful toil, return to Europe, and furnish to others a warning not to attempt the hopeless task.

But you will naturally suppose, and we frankly acknowledge, that we apply to you from the hope of seeing our endeavours crowned with
success,

success, and of converting some, at least, of the Hindoos and Mahometans to the faith of the Gospel. From the perusal of ecclesiastical history, we plainly perceive that Christianity has triumphed over as great obstacles as it will have to contend with in India: and we likewise read in the infallible page of inspiration, that the Christian is to be the universal religion, and will bring into subjection to its principles and precepts all the nations of the earth without exception. If we, therefore, employ the methods which Divine Wisdom has appointed for the propagation of the Gospel, we have reason to hope that we shall not labour in vain, and that we may be the means of sowing in Bengal the seed of Divine truth, which will in a course of time yield a plentiful harvest. Our hopes are confirmed by this additional consideration, that we do not find that any good and faithful Missionaries have employed their efforts wholly without effect: on the contrary, their labours have been uniformly attended with as much success as, all things considered, they had reason to expect. Should similar success attend our endeavours, you will have no reason to repent of letting us go.

The principles of Christianity which we will inculcate, and they receive, are of unrivalled excellence. They point out in the clearest manner the obligations, duty, and happiness of intelligent creatures, and have the most powerful tendency to make men good, contented, and happy. No Religion presents so just, so full, and so perfect a system of morals as the Gospel of Jesus Christ: and it teaches men to act from principles far more exalted and divine than any other. Its scheme of social virtues is so framed, as to adorn every relation in life, by the laudable exercise of every good disposition and virtuous action. Integrity, fidelity, industry, frugality, contentment, and benevolence, are all recommended by the strongest motives, and en-
joined

joined by the highest authority. As society is composed of individuals, and takes its colour from their principles, dispositions, and conduct, the reception of Christianity will have the most benign influence on the body politic. As the sum of social virtue will be thereby increased, so likewise the peace and happiness of society. The exercise of the forementioned and other Christian virtues, will produce much enjoyment in the bosom of their possessors.

But we can add something which will still more effectually remove every ground of jealousy on this account. That a mission may be carried on in India without endangering the peace of society, or producing any bad effects, is a matter not merely of reasoning, but of *fact*. The Danes have had a mission at Tranquebar, for near a century past; and in your territories in the Carnatic, there have been missionaries for more than fifty years. The labours of both have been crowned with some degree of success: and both number in the list of their converts, some thousands of persons brought to the profession of Christianity from among the Mahometans and Hindoos. But not the smallest injury to society has arisen from their change of religion. Our principles, we will with confidence say, are equally pacific as their's: and have as direct a tendency to promote peace and good will among men.

One certain effect of a successful mission among the inhabitants of Bengal, will be an increase of attachment to Europeans and their Government. Gratitude, which in this instance is uniformly found to operate with peculiar energy, will inspire them with respect and affection for those who have made them happy, by conveying to them the knowledge of the best religion. They will naturally feel a warm regard for a Nation of the same faith with themselves: They will have a

more ardent desire for living under its government, and be more zealously concerned for its stability and continuance. The inclination which, from their religious tenets, they may now have for the dominion of the Mahometans or Hindoos, must cease at their conversion to Christianity. Mahometan or Hindoo Rulers, they must be sensible, would disturb them in the profession of their faith; and the peaceable enjoyment of their religious liberty, and their respectability as men, must depend on their living under a Christian government: and they would thereby be constrained by the strong bond of interest to support it, as their own welfare is closely connected with its existence and vigour. The instruction of the children in the religion, and in the sciences of Europe, and of some of them in our language, must further contribute to increase their attachment to the English; and in proportion to their numbers, to strengthen the government established in their country.

The objections which some have adduced from the uncertain effects of a change of religion on the natives, must proceed from not duly weighing the principles of Christianity, or not considering their influence on the human heart. As in dealings between man and man it is found that honesty is the best policy; so it may be regarded as one of the established laws in the government of the world, that the best principles in the hearts of the people, will always produce the happiest effects in securing the peace and prosperity of a community. The Author of the Christian Religion is the Ruler of the Universe, and he hath so framed its principles, that they shall most powerfully conduce to the benefit of civil society. Good principles are massy columns of brass resting on a rock, and will for ages support the building without injury; and the better these principles are understood, and the more extensively

extensively they are diffused, the greater stability will they give to the government.

But while some will allow the Christian Religion to be favourable to the peace and happiness of society, they are afraid of the change, and consider the season when that takes place as exceedingly hazardous, and big with confusion and disorder*. It will be granted, that a sudden change even from bad to good principles, if it were to take place among a whole people at once, might produce some temporary effects of an evil nature, and endanger the public peace. Warm imaginations and eager passions might, by not understanding the system they had hastily adopted, overleap the bounds of propriety and order. But the mode prescribed by the great Author of our religion, and which, as his Disciples, we mean strictly to observe, has not these inconveniencies attending it; it is necessarily gradual. The effects so far as they are produced, are highly beneficial, but they are from their nature slow. Conviction of the truth and excellence of Christianity, can alone produce a true convert : none but such would we admit to our communion; and this conviction ordinarily proceeds by no rapid degrees from mind to mind. We shall think that we have spent twenty years to good purpose, if four or five hundred of the natives shall receive the Gospel in sincerity. It is only after a lapse of several generations, that Christianity can be expected to have made so extensive a progress, as to influence the mass of the people of Bengal. In the primitive ages of the

* The civil commotions in different countries while undergoing a change of religion, have always arisen either from propagating, or opposing it with the sword. Such a method as this, and, in short, any kind of violence, compulsion and force, appears in our eyes infinitely mad, and infinitely wicked. No convulsion was produced by the peaceful labours of the primitive Missionaries of Christ.

church, almost three hundred years revolved from the time of the preaching of the Apostles, before the majority of the inhabitants of the empire embraced the Christian faith. We have argued on the supposition of a very considerable body of people submitting to the Gospel: but that is an event which is still at a considerable distance. From the limited views we have expressed of our hopes of success, the most timorous opposer of new things need not be alarmed. According to our judgments, the conversion of five hundred natives of Bengal to the faith of Christ in the course of twenty years, will communicate more happiness to us, than if we could, at the end of that time, return to Europe each with a fortune of five hundred thousand pounds. As the effects produced on these people, would be greatly for their own benefit, and the benefit of society, why should your Honourable Court prevent us from making the attempt?

To prove the harmlessness, nay, the utility of a mission to India, nothing more, we trust, need be said. We have argued on the subject with a confidence not begotten by enthusiasm, but inspired by the nature of Christianity, by its effects in every age, by its uniform tendency, in a word, by those sure guides of human judgment and actions, observation, experience, and facts. In every thing relating to commerce, we bow with submission to your superior judgment. But in what respects the Christian religion; the probability of success, notwithstanding the strongest prejudices; the effects of the Gospel on the hearts of individuals; and the influence of it on the state of society, these both from our ordinary pursuits, and from our present plan, have so much engaged our attention, that we should think ourselves unfit for the office of missionaries, and at the same time not wanting in respect for your Honourable Court, if we did not prefer our own.

It

It has been urged by some as an objection to our plan, " that they never knew a good Hindoo become a Christian." But permit us without rudeness to ask, if among the many hundreds or thousands you have known, that went to India, the design of any one in going has been to learn or to teach the Christian religion to the natives? Have you been acquainted with any who visited Bengal on purpose to set before the natives an example of piety, humility, meekness, self-denial, mortification to the world, and those other dispositions which Christ enjoins on his Disciples? Or did you ever see an Englishman spending his time as diligently, from year to year, in endeavouring to convert the natives to Christianity, as others did in their various employments to acquire that affluence to which a patient course of industry gives so valid a claim? And without such means, both of sanctity of example, and assiduity of instruction, the conversion of a single heathen is not to be looked for.

Allow us, Gentlemen, earnestly to intreat you to give the subject the most serious consideration. It is of infinite consequence to yourselves that you should. You have much power committed to you by the Governor and Judge of the human race. No private men in the world have the happiness of so many millions depending on them. It is our earnest wish, that as in the supreme Ruler, your goodness may be equal to your power; and that your authority may be a blessing to your subjects, and not an injury. You may, no doubt, refuse to let Missionaries go to Bengal, but we hope you will not. If you should, allow us to expostulate with you on the consequences of such a refusal. The public will form a very different judgment from you. A few men desirous to promote the most important interests of their fellow creatures, petition for leave to go to India to preach the Gospel to the natives.

tives. They give you the most solemn assurances that they will not in the slightest degree intermeddle with your government or commerce; and that they purpose to devote their lives entirely to the instruction of your Indian subjects in the principles of the Christian (which is your own) religion, in order to make them wise, and good, and happy. The only favour they ask of you is, that you would protect them from injury while they shall demean themselves as virtuous and peaceable members of society. This you refuse.

But how must your refusal appear in the eyes of men of liberality, of literature, of commercial equity, of philanthropy, and of religion? Will it raise the character of the Directors of the East-India Company in the eyes of the world?

Men of liberal minds will certainly exclaim, "Is it possible the
 "Gentlemen in the Direction of East-India affairs can have minds so
 "narrow and contracted, as to prevent a few well-meaning men from
 "going to Bengal to do good in their own way? Should they be
 "mistaken or enthusiasts, they could not do a millionth part of the
 "harm that some have done who went out with the leave of the
 "Company. As they are not to interfere in commerce, and as it is
 "at all times in the power of the Government to send them out of
 "the country, if they meddle with things that do not belong to them,
 "a refusal certainly does not display the liberality of mind which
 "should stamp the conduct of so powerful a body of men. You may
 "think they will do no good, as it is impossible for them to succeed.
 "Though we have not the same views with themselves, and do not
 "entertain so high an idea of the beneficial result of their labours,
 "yet

“ yet we think it would be illiberal not to allow them to make a trial.
 “ Let them obtain conviction of the inutility of their scheme, by ex-
 “ periening disappointment and failure of success.”

To the severe awards of men of literature a refusal will likewise expose you. Every attempt to arrest the progress of science they consider as rude and horrid Vandalism. The light of science is in their eyes that which improves the nature and state of man : it exalts his faculties, it encreases his means of subsistence, it heightens his enjoyments, and gives to society, as well as individuals, greater degrees of prosperity, happiness, and virtue. Of all the sciences which benefit mankind, the Christian system is the first. It employs the faculties upon the noblest subjects; it communicates the most valuable knowledge; it inculcates every virtue; and it produces such habits and conduct as contribute to the honour and felicity of man in every relation. Besides, it is always accompanied with other sciences, which are more nearly or remotely connected with it, and leads to the study of them : it is favourable to the study of all. An attempt is proposed to be made to convey the Divine science of religion and morals, and the various branches connected with them, into a distant part of the world. As they consider every ray as encreasing the light, and every teacher as augmenting the sum of human knowledge, will they not exclaim against the barbarism of those who, like Abubeker, make war with science, and employ their power to keep the world in darkness?

Even men of commercial equity will take part against you. We come to you in the name of millions; our request is the request of all
 the

the friends of religion in the British Empire. Will not their plain minds, although not enlarged by liberality, nor enlightened by science, judging on the equitable principle of commercial intercourse, pass this decision on your conduct? “ Gentlemen, here are some millions of
 “ people who have been your customers for many years. They have
 “ expended many millions of pounds in purchasing your Indian com-
 “ modities, and have helped to enrich you and your constituents by
 “ their dealings; for it is by the public, that a trading company,
 “ as well as an individual, obtains their wealth. Here is a favour,
 “ a small favour, and the first of the kind they have applied for from
 “ you, namely, that you would permit a few of their number to preach
 “ their good and peaceable doctrine in your territories. If recipro-
 “ city of benefits be a principle on which individual merchants and
 “ trading companies should act, equity will dictate, that they ought
 “ not to meet with a refusal.”

Nor will men of *philanthropy* pass a milder sentence on your conduct. It is a pleasing feature of the present age, that there are many whose highest ambition it is to promote the happiness of their fellow-creatures. Not only in their own neighbourhood do they labour to banish misery and to sow the seeds of happiness; but considering themselves as citizens of the world, and the earth as their country, they are deeply concerned for the welfare of the people of every land, and enter with eagerness into every plan for meliorating the condition of the human race, whether it relates to the comfort of the body or the mind. Should they hear that you refuse your patronage, nay, even leave for persons to go and disseminate those divine truths which have so strong a tendency to promote the highest happiness of man among the
 natives

natives of Bengal, from the natural benevolence of their hearts, they will be unable to refrain from exclaiming with anguish : “ What a
 “ pity that our most opulent merchants should not feel a warmer zeal
 “ for the happiness of man, and should endeavour to make every thing
 “ subservient to gain.”

But above all, by *men of religion* will your conduct be most severely condemned, and most deeply lamented. These form a very numerous body : they consider Christianity as the most valuable inheritance of man, and the most effectual means of securing him the highest degree of felicity ; and they are exceedingly desirous that it may be diffused throughout the world. They consider our conquests abroad, and our colonies, as committed into our hands for this very end, and that we may render the condition of the people happier, by propagating among them that Divine system of Religion with which God has in mercy favoured us. It never entered into their minds that any opposition could possibly be made, by persons professing themselves Christians, to such a measure. When the idea was suggested to them of the possibility of a refusal, they started at it with horror, and would not admit the supposition. Should you still refuse, they will be shocked at what appears to them a complication of evils, of impiety in robbing God of the honour due to his name, and of cruelty in depriving men of that happiness which the Gospel of Christ alone can give. It would be vain to attempt to express in words what all the sincere friends of religion would feel at seeing persons in the most respectable situations, and clothed with extensive authority, sacrificing the eternal felicity of their fellow-creatures at the shrine of worldly policy, or the love of gain,

What regard you may think due to the character, or respect to the judgment of these different classes of men, we pretend not to say. But all of them must unite as one man in reprobating a refusal of our reasonable request; and, as Britons who love their Country and their Constitution, must censure your conduct, as doing a material injury to the British Government, and counteracting its designs. Rational freedom has ever been deemed, its distinguishing characteristic; and religious liberty, its glory. It shuts the door of no province of the Empire from the Gospel of Christ. Certainly then it never designed to give this power to the East-India Company: it never conceived they would so interpret their charter; or if they did, that they would ever entertain an idea in their mind, or a wish in their heart, to prevent British Missionaries from carrying the Gospel into their dominions. Should the Company now reject our Petition, and prevent Christianity from entering Bengal, they will certainly cast the blackest reflections on this country, and on the Government; and will furnish the enemies of the Constitution with the strongest handle against it, of which they were ever able to get hold.

The history of the world does not afford a similar instance of conduct. Twenty-four English merchants, of splendid fortunes, men of a liberal education, and of enlarged minds, and who will receive credit from the world for a considerable share of philanthropy; men professing the Christian Religion, and consequently believing that it is unspeakably superior to every other, and has the most powerful tendency to promote the happiness of mankind, and by the providence of God invested with sovereign authority over the populous provinces in Hindostan. That men in such a situation, and with such advantages,

tages, should be unwilling to permit Christianity (the religion they themselves profess) to be carried to that country, and should appear to wish to shut up twelve millions of people from the benefits of that religion which conduces greatly to their present comfort, and secures their eternal blessedness, is *unique* in the annals of mankind. The records of nations contain nothing like it; nor has language terms to express it. Every other State, Protestant and Catholic, which has had foreign colonies and settlements, has procured and employed Missionaries to instruct the natives in the principles of Christianity. This has been the case for the last two hundred years; and an exception cannot be produced. If at the end of the eighteenth century the Directors of the East-India Company refuse liberty to persons who wish to undertake a mission at their own expence, they will not be able to plead a precedent; and men of literature, of liberality, of philanthropy, and of religion, will cordially unite in their prayers to Heaven, that it may remain an *unique* in the decrees of the rulers of the nations, till the world itself shall be dissolved.

If it should appear to you that we have stated these things strongly, do not, we beseech you, consider us as guilty of disrespect to your Honourable Court. Nothing is farther from our thoughts. It is our wish to state what we conceive to be truth, and important truth, with all frankness and simplicity. But while we use not flattering words, we should be much grieved, if you were to accuse us of treating you with rudeness. Regard us as men of integrity speaking plainly what they strongly feel, on a subject of the greatest moment.

It is vain to entertain a hope, that if leave be refused, it will prevent every future application, and silence the importunity of your

Petitioners. The certain consequence of a refusal will be a contest with the friends of religion, who must feel that they are called on to exert themselves with persevering firmness, in order to attain their benevolent object. In this contest you will labour under many disadvantages.

The *numbers* against you perhaps you are not aware of. Some millions in the British Empire will be found to discover a concern for the propagation of Christianity; and millions are not to be despised.

The *cause* which you would have to oppose, is, in the eyes of all the friends of Religion, the cause of human happiness. In their view you are setting yourselves against it, and endeavouring to detain in a state of the most deplorable ignorance and abject misery, the many millions of whom you are by Divine Providence constituted the parents and guardians.

The principles with which you would contend are of the highest and most powerful kind. You cannot bring equal ones into the field. The friends of Religion are actuated by a sense of *duty both to God and man*. They feel the influence of the precept of their Creator enjoining them to make Him, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, known to every nation under Heaven, and to banish idolatry, which is in direct opposition to his nature and his will, from off the face of the earth. In consequence of another command which says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, they consider themselves under the strongest obligations, to communicate the means of eternal happiness to their less favoured brethren in Bengal, who are
destitute

destitute of the Gospel, and exposed by their ignorance and idolatry to the most dreadful evils. What principles can you oppose to these, that your own minds or an impartial world will deem of equal magnitude.

As to the final issue of the business, we entertain not a single doubt. The success of the friends of Christianity may be considered as absolutely certain. In an age of darkness, when a subject is imperfectly understood, or when it is not fought on principle, or when it is the cause but of a few, it may be opposed with efficacy. But the case here is widely different. It is an age of light: the subject has been under the consideration of religious people for some years past: they are sensible of its importance: it is espoused by multitudes which will increase with the investigation: and it is pursued by them from a sense of duty.

We are aware that those who are unacquainted with the strength of religious motives, may disregard what has been adduced, as hollow boasting: but those who either from the annals of Ecclesiastical history, or from their own observation and experience, know the mighty energy of the principles of Christianity on the heart as a spring of action, will consider it as certain as an axiom in Euclid, that in the final issue of the contest, Christianity will prevail, and find an entrance into Bengal.

The only prospect the Directors can now have, is that of a continual contest till the object of our petition be granted. We are but a few individuals: but the cause is not ours only, it is the cause of every friend of religion in the country: and they will not cease to strain

strain every nerve in order to accomplish their purpose. They may be opposed: they may be defeated of their wishes: they may meet with one refusal after another: but, still undismayed, they will persevere, conscious that their cause is the cause of God; and that *magna est veritas, & prevalebit*. This is no threat, nor let it be considered by you as the effect of fullen obstinacy, which should not be gratified by success. It proceeds from the principles of the Gospel, from love to God, and love to man, and from a sense of allegiance to Jesus Christ. Had any of you, gentlemen, the unhappiness to have a brother in a state of slavery among the Moors in Barbary, you would feel yourselves constrained both by duty and affection, to do every thing in your power to obtain his release. If one application did not succeed, you would make another, and never rest satisfied till your object was gained. To the man who would accuse you of obstinacy because of your perseverance, and say that you deserve to be refused on that account, would you not reply: "your accusation is unjust: you know not the affection of a brother's heart, or you would not allow such words to escape your lips." The friends of religion consider the inhabitants of Bengal as their brethren, whose minds are enslaved by ignorance, and idolatry, and vice. They feel a sincere affection for them, and are earnestly solicitous for their deliverance from spiritual bondage. Besides, the great Father of the family, who has made of one blood, all nations of men who dwell on the face of the earth, does with the united force of authority and love, command us to deliver our unhappy brethren from their miserable condition. What then would your Honourable Court have the lovers of religion to do? Must they not obey the commands of their Father and their God, and with persevering ardour seek the conversion of their idolatrous brethren to the faith of the Gospel? Do not call this threatening: we mean it not so.

But

But we feel for the miseries of the heathen, and our perseverance proceeds from affection to them, not from disrespect to you. Let us entreat you, Gentlemen, instead of opposing, to grant us your favour, and patronize our attempts.

Infidels and atheists, disbelieving a future state, and regarding man merely as a creature of a present world, may ridicule such a mode of reasoning; but we consider you in a very different light, and we should look upon you as utterly unfit to be guardians of the happiness of so many millions of immortal beings, unless your principles were of a very opposite kind, and unless you could, from your knowledge and belief of the Christian system, fully enter into the force of the arguments which have been employed.

Those who are ignorant of the moral state of Hindostan, may allege, that the people are very good, and do very well without the religion of Jesus. But in answer to this objection, we beg them to attend to the testimony of two men, who are at present endeavouring to convert the natives to Christianity. One of them, Mr. Carey, who lives in the neighbourhood of Maldah, writes to the Baptist Society in England to this effect. "Lying, theft, whoredom, and
"deceit are sins for which the Hindoos are notorious. There is not
"a company of ten men, I believe, to be met with, to whom you
"might not safely address these words. All the good that can with jus-
"tice be said in favour of them is, they are not so ferocious as many
"other Heathens."* The other is the venerable Mr. Swartz, who has been labouring as a Missionary in the Carnatic between forty and fifty years. In a letter to the Society in London for propagating the

* Periodical Accounts of Baptist Society, No. 3, p. 320.

Gospel in Foreign Parts, which was published by them in 1795, he expresses his opinion of the natives in the following terms: "The knowledge of God, of his Divine perfections, and of his mercy to mankind, may be abused; but there is no other method of reclaiming mankind but by instructing them well. To hope that the Heathens will live a good life without the knowledge of God is a chimera. The praise bestowed on the Heathens of this country by many of our historians, is refuted by a close (I might almost say superficial) inspection of their lives. Many historical works are more like a romance than history. Many gentlemen here are astonished how some historians have prostituted their talents by writing fables."

We know not how far you may think it merits some degree of consideration from you, that if leave be obtained as the fruit of persevering efforts only, it is more than probable that it will be in a more extensive degree than is now solicited, and in a way that may be less under the controul of the Directors of the Company. Besides, nothing is more common, in the course of a long investigation, than for new things to occur which were not thought of at first, which considerably enlarge the scene, and produce effects far beyond what was originally asked or refused.

We will suppose for a moment, that by refusing our request you could prevent us and others from carrying the knowledge of Christianity to Bengal, and could for a few years longer shut up the natives in superstition, and *establish* idolatry. What benefit or pleasure would accrue to you from thence?

It

It will not promote your interests. The stability as well as the prosperity both of individuals and trading companies often rests on the support of persons whom they neither know nor think of, nay, of those whom they despise. Yours depends not only on the obedience of the people of Hindostan, but on the good-will of the people of Great-Britain : and do you conceive that a refusal to permit the blessings of Christianity to your subjects will not appear to spring from jealousy sacrificing every thing to pecuniary advantage ? Will such a conduct render the friends of Religion, the most virtuous part of the community, attached to your interests, or disposed with ardour to support your cause ?

Nor will a refusal add to your *reputation*. One certain consequence will be the dislike of all good men, who will be unable to view without the most marked disapprobation, or even horror, a mode of proceeding which opposes, in the most direct and open manner, the honour of God and the happiness of man. What will render it still more heinous in their eyes is the respectable station in society which the persons hold.

Far will it likewise be from conducing to your happiness, and securing the repose of your own minds. Amidst the pursuits of the world, and the joys of prosperity, too many lose sight of God and of a future state, and of the path which leads to blessedness beyond the grave. But there is a time approaching when the most heedless will be glad to seek for refuge in the consolations of the Gospel. When life is fast drawing to a close, the world furnishes and offers no resources : the fruit of all the labour of past years is ready to vanish away for ever. The soul, arrested by the views of futurity, looks with anxiety into an eternal state ; but no rational peace of mind can

E

be

be found, either as to the forgiveness of past transgressions, or the hope of future felicity, but what springs from the mercy of God through the mediation of Jesus Christ. At such a season, when you feel the necessity of this method of obtaining peace with God, would no sting, no bitterness of heart be created by the reflection? "I refused to allow the glad tidings of this salvation and mercy to sinners, to be carried to millions of my fellow-creatures, of whose happiness, that God, at whose righteous tribunal I must soon appear, constituted me the guardian: I deprived them of that, which I now find can alone afford one ray of hope, or one thought of peace."

Nor let us be considered as using the language of passionate severity, but of calm and eternal truth, if we add, that such a display of authority will expose you to the displeasure of the great Governor of the world. "Christianity," you say by your profession of it, "is, and alone is a divine revelation." It is the will of God, that it should be the religion of the whole world, and that it should banish idolatry and superstition from the face of the earth. The Disciples of Jesus he has commanded to propagate the Gospel in every country, and to carry it to those who are destitute of it. Judge then, how deeply those Rulers must incur his displeasure, who refuse the religion of Jesus an entrance into their dominions, and bid Christian Missionaries approach them at their peril. Such exercise of authority, is in direct opposition to the will and government of God; it must infallibly draw down on them his dislike and anger, and attaches an awful responsibility, which may justly make the boldest of earthly princes tremble at the thoughts of appearing before the Supreme tribunal.

We have made the supposition, that you will refuse our request: but we cannot allow ourselves to think that you will act in this manner.

ner. On the contrary, we are confident that when you have weighed the matter fully, you will be so perfectly convinced of the reasonableness of our petition, the excellence of its object, and of the utility of the mission, if it should be crowned with success, that you will cordially grant what we ask, become the patrons of our little society, and ensure us protection in your dominions. Of such a step you will never have reason to repent. It will not injure your interests; it will procure you the heartfelt congratulations of millions; and it will be a laudable imitation of the Supreme Ruler, whose highest and constant design is to diffuse knowledge, religion, virtue and happiness among all his subjects, in the most extensive degree.

On us you will lay the strongest obligations. We shall ever consider ourselves greatly indebted to you; and if we had not higher principles which produce the same effect, we should feel ourselves constrained by bonds of gratitude ever to act with prudence in our mission, and with a constant regard to the peace and happiness of the country, that you may never have reason to say that you had to do with ungrateful men, or to regret that you granted us permission to go.

Nor will you have the gratitude of us alone: millions besides will unite their thanks. Literature and Philanthropy with ten thousand tongues will praise the liberality of your conduct: but especially the friends of Religion will bless you for your kindness, and offer up their most fervent prayers for your prosperity: and there is a high authority which says, *the fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much*. You will render them attached to you, and they will feel a lively interest in your welfare. No considerate person will think this of little value;

for what so much adorns and strengthens a cause as the attachment of wife and good and virtuous men ?

But what must afford a higher gratification to every benevolent mind, the blessings of millions now ready to perish will come upon you, and you will make the hearts of the miserable to sing for joy. The natives of India, converted from their idolatry and superstition to the faith of Christ, and exulting in the benefits and promises of the Gospel, will look back with rapture to the day when they became subject to your dominion, and hail you as their noblest benefactors. If to relieve the wretched from their misery, and those in the most imminent danger, from death, draw forth their warmest gratitude and fill the heart with complacency ; these will belong to you in a higher sense, than when the matter relates only to the distresses of the present world, for the felicity conferred will be of eternal duration.

But all these, however important, sink into insignificance when compared with one thing on which every human being should set infinitely the highest value, namely, the approbation of God, whose favour is life, and whose displeasure is worse than death. One of the methods employed by Him to promote the happiness of mankind, has been to put barbarous nations under the dominion of those that are civilized, and pagan nations under those that profess Christianity, that the blessings of civilization and the Christian Religion might be diffused among them. Those may be justly reckoned among the number of persons most highly favoured, to whom such opportunities are given of doing service to the human race. This honourable post is yours ; and an opportunity is given you, which, if embraced, will place you high in the list of benefactors to mankind. While
you

you thus do good to men, you will be performing an act which is agreeable to the Supreme Being, who delights in the propagation of the Gospel. At the same time you will take the most effectual means of establishing and continuing your own dominion in Hindostan. When the power of man is employed to counteract the purposes of God, it saps its own foundation, it cuts short its own duration, and provokes Him to take abused power away. But when human authority exerts itself to promote the benevolent designs of Heaven in advancing religion and happiness, then dominion is founded on a rock, and stability given to it by its resemblance to the throne of Jehovah, which is eternal, because Justice and Judgment are its basis; and mercy, truth, and good will to men, are continually before his face.

ROBERT HALDANE.
DAVID BOGUE.
WILLIAM INNES.
GREVILLE EWING.

